

Lethal Politics: Soviet Genocide and Mass Murder Since 1917 by RJ Rummel -

From the text:

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PREFACE*

This book is part of a project on government genocide and mass killing in this century. The aim is to test the hypothesis that the citizens of democracies are the least likely to be murdered by their own governments; the citizens of totalitarian, especially Marxist systems, the most likely. The theory is that democratic systems provide a path to peace, and universalizing them would eliminate war and minimize global, political violence. This was the conclusion of my *Understanding Conflict and War*,¹ and has been further confirmed by systematic, empirical tests since.²

In the process of that research, I discovered that governments have murdered millions of their own citizens, and that in some cases, the death toll may have actually exceeded that of World War II. To get some idea of the numbers involved, I surveyed the extent of genocide and mass killing by governments since 1900. The results were shocking: according to these first figures, independent of war and other kinds of conflict, governments probably have murdered 119,400,000 people, Marxist governments about 95,200,000 of them. By comparison, the battle-killed in all foreign and domestic wars in this century total 35,700,000.³

These monstrous statistics sharply reoriented my research. For over thirty years, as a political scientist and peace researcher, my research had focused on the causes and conditions of war, conflict, and peace. I had believed that war was

the greatest killer and that nuclear war would be a global holocaust. Now I have found that aside from war the total killed by government was almost four times that of war. It was as though a nuclear war had already occurred.

Surprisingly few have recognized this. While much has been published on individual genocides, such as of the Jews or Armenians, and some general analyses have been done, as by Kuper⁴, virtually no research has been published on the total amount of genocide and mass murder among nations.⁵ The one exception is Elliot's Twentieth Century Book of the Dead, which arrives at a figure of about 100,000,000 killed in this century, including war. The work, however, omits many small genocides and is limited in its treatment of killing by Marxist governments.

For these reasons, with a grant from the United States Peace Institute, I undertook in 1988 a project to refine and elaborate my findings, to determine empirically the conditions and causes of government genocide and mass killing, and to assess the role of democratic versus autocratic institutions. The aim was to provide a comprehensive overview of such governmental murder, to test further whether the more democratic a nation, the more secure its citizens from such killing, and to publish the results in a major monograph.

Among the first studies undertaken was that of Soviet genocide and mass murder. This was a very difficult task, for while widely different estimates were available on such Soviet institutions as the labor camp, such policies as collectivization or the Red Terror, or such events as the deportation of Poles in 1939-1941, few experts had tried to systematically accumulate and total them over Soviet history. To my knowledge, there are only two major works in English attempting to tally the toll in some systematic manner.⁶ Robert Conquest gives a carefully accumulated total for the Stalin years (at least 20,000,000 killed)⁷; and in his samizdat translated into English, Dyadkin, a Soviet geophysicist, did a demographic analysis of excess Soviet deaths, 1926 to 1954, and concluded that Soviet repression killed 23,100,000 to 32,000,000 Soviet citizens over this 29-year period.⁸

Scattered here and there in one book or another are estimates of the number murdered. For example, Panin claims that 57,000,000 to 69,500,000 were killed, and says that estimates of authors in the West vary from 45,000,000 to 80,000,000 ⁹; Solzhenitsyn mentions a 66,000,000 figure calculated by an ŽmigrŽ professor of statistics ¹⁰; and Stewart-Smith gives an estimate of 31,000,000 killed in repression ¹¹. Like Dyadkin's, some estimates have been based on demographic analyses, as Medvedev's 22,000,000 to 23,000,000 total (1918-1953), or Dyadkin's aforementioned figures.¹²

For lack of a thorough statistical accumulation and analysis of Soviet genocides and mass murder from 1917 to recent years, I had to undertake at least a first effort in this direction. Initially, the result was to be a chapter in a monograph on 20th century genocide and mass killing. But it soon became clear that the Soviets themselves are responsible for so many genocides, and that so many different kinds of mass killings had occurred, that to unravel and present the detailed events and institutions involved and the related statistics would require a monograph itself. Thus this book.

To best present the historical details, statistical analyses, and various figures and sources, and yet to make the book readable and useful to various publics, I have divided the book in the following way. First, the statistical data, sources, and analyses have been separated from the historical when, what, and why of the estimates. This provides an explanation and understanding of the deaths being reported, and historical narrative for those uninterested in the statistical details, while also making available the statistical material for specialists. Second, rather than put all the statistics in one, huge appendix at the end of the book, an appendix has been prepared for each historical period, thus keeping the historical narrative and related statistical material together. Third, each historical period has been treated as a chapter, with the associated statistical appendix at the end. Finally, an historical overview and analysis and presentation of the final results was made the first chapter, which constitutes an executive summary. Its appendices sum up the statistical data, compares these to estimates in the literature, and simulates the result of altering some important assumptions.

I should note that there is a clear division in style between the appendices and the historical narrative. In the appendices I have tried to be as objective, neutral, and balanced in a conservative direction as possible, recognizing that we all have biases that work against our best intentions in surprising ways. The methodological appendix to this book spells out the principles and procedures guiding the preparation of the estimates and totals in the appendices.

However, in the narrative I have been less than dry and disinterested. I am clearly horrified by the nature and extent of mass killings being recorded; as a pacifist, I have been so overcome with emotion that at times I have had to put this work aside many times. Therefore, I did not restrain myself from peppering the narrative with adjectives like "monstrous", "horrible", and "evil", and liberally used irony and sarcasm as rhetorical weapons against this inhumanity. The style of Solzhenitsyn's Gulag seemed also appropriate here. But he wrote with a mission, and from the perspective of his own experience, and I am no Solzhenitsyn. Once I was able to unload myself onto a preliminary draft, I then

thoroughly revised it, eliminating the more "egregious" adjectives and phrases. Nonetheless, a style remains which is more assertive, less "balanced", than some specialists and historians might desire. If this be so, then I can only say that it is to others I must leave writing with dispassion about the murder of tens of millions of human beings.

One final comment on the term murder. If anything may appear to display an anti-Soviet, less than professional bias, it may be the consistent accusation that the Soviets have murdered all these millions; and to use the term in the title of this book. I am doing this, however, because I believe the technical meaning of murder fits what the Soviets did. To murder someone means to unlawfully and purposely kill him, or to be responsible for his death through reckless and depraved indifference to his life (as in Soviet deportations or the labor camps). As established by the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal after World War II, "crimes against humanity" consists of

murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation and other inhuman acts done against any civilian population, or persecutions on political, racial or religious grounds, when such acts are done or such persecutions are carried on in execution of or in connexion with any crime against peace or any war crime.¹³

With the Nazi invasion of Poland that began World War II, their massacre of Jews and others, deportation of civilians, atrocities in occupied territory, execution of opponents at home, and so on, were thus crimes against humanity. Similar acts by Soviet authorities during their own civil and international wars were also such crimes.

As for Soviet genocides, massacres of civilians, deportations, and the like, in time of peace, the Genocide Convention, passed by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948 covers much of that. By Article I:

The Contracting Parties confirm that genocide, whether committed in time of peace or in time of war, is a crime under international law which they undertake to prevent and to punish.¹⁴

The Soviet representative, among others, successfully fought to limit the interpretation of genocide to national, religious, ethnic, and language groups.¹⁵ The massacre of political groups and opponents are purposely excluded. But a

prior resolution of the General Assembly passed in late 1946 explicitly covers them. According to this resolution,

Genocide is a denial of the right of existence of entire human groups, as homicide is the denial of the right to live of individual human beings....Many instances of such crimes of genocide have occurred, when racial, religious, political and other groups have been destroyed, entirely or in part....

The General Assembly Therefore, Affirms that genocide is a crime under international law which the civilized world condemns, and for the commission of which principals and accomplices--whether private individuals, public officials or statesmen, and whether the crime is committed on religious, racial, political or any other grounds--are punishable.¹⁶

All this covers what the Soviets did in killing their own or subject people. According to the international community, these were crimes against humanity. They were illegal. If ever the responsible actual or former Soviet officials were tried before an international tribunal for these crimes, they could be punished as murderers.

While trying to be as historically objective as possible, we also should not fear calling a murderer, a murderer; and murder, murder.

NOTES

* This is a pre-publisher edited version of the preface in R.J. Rummel's *Lethal Politics: Soviet Genocide and Mass Murder Since 1917*, New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1990

1. Rummel (*Understanding Conflict and War*)

2. See Rummel ("Libertarianism and International Violence", "Libertarianism, Violence Within States, and the Polarity Principle", "Libertarian Propositions on Violence Within and Between Nations: A Test Against Published Research Results")

3. Rummel (1986, 1987, 1988).

4. Kuper (1981).

5. Melgounov (1925) and Maximoff (1940).

6. Conquest (1968, Appendix A). In a report written for the United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary (1970), Conquest attempts to estimate the number killed since 1917, which he concludes would have to be over 22,000,000 citizens (p. 25). This effort is much less systematic than op. cit.

7. Dyadkin (1983, p. 60). An assumed 20 million war dead for World War II and 40 thousand for the Soviet-Finnish War are subtracted from Dyadkin's figures.

8. Panin (1976, p. 93n).

9. Solzhenitsyn (1975a, p. 10).

10. Stewart-Smith (1964, p. 222). Includes the "1933-5" famine.

11. Medvedev (1979, pp. 140-141); from Soviet demographer M. Maksudov.

12. Solzhenitsyn (1973).

13. Falk, et al. (1971, p. 108).

14. Kuper (1981, p. 210).

15. Ibid., Chapter 2.

16. Quoted in Ibid., p. 23.

For citations see the Lethal Politics REFERENCES

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I also wish to thank George Kent for his helpful comments on the draft of Chapter 1 and Ernest Lefever and Manfred Henningsen for causing me to reconsider and revise the narrative style. As in all my work, I owe many thanks to my wife, Grace, for her comfort, honesty, and thorough editing. I hasten to add, that I alone am responsible for the what follows." End of text

<https://hawaii.edu/powerkills/NOTE4.HTM>